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Time to get clean for the Queen as town prepares for big birthday



SCHOOLS, businesses and community groups in Banbury have been given a rallying call to clean up and celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday, with the town's biggest ever litter pick ahead of the big day in April.

Full story on page 3

Union criticises franchise bid as 'death by a thousand cuts'

POST OFFICE UNDER THREAT

BANBURY'S town centre dedicated post office could be closed, in what has been called "devastating" news for customers.

The office in High Street is one of 39 around the UK that have been put forward by the Post Office to be franchised.

That could mean the service may move inside a shop – such as a supermarket – or be merged with another post office branch outside the town centre. The nearest is in Grimsbury.

The plans have been criticised by the Communication Workers Union, which represents post office workers.

Area representative Sue Trehearne said: "This news is really unsettling for our members. They have been shocked by what has happened.

"The office will probably end being in the back of someone's shop so customers can't get through without being bombarded by other products, or they'll be upstairs somewhere causing problems for disabled people.

"For now, the staff have been left in limbo and are obviously very upset."

The nine staff working at the Banbury office were told the news by a Post Office representative at a meeting at the office last Tuesday.

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

Possible franchisees have until February 16 to put forward a bid for the branch.

If a bid is made, a six-week public consultation will follow, where customers can have their say on what services they would like provided.

But if a bidder does not come forward, the Post Office has said it would look at alternative means of providing post office services, including mergers.

Banbury MP Victoria Prentis called for possible franchisees to come forward and take on the running of the post office.

She said: "I am in regular contact with Post Office Ltd, and use this post office myself from time to time.

"I really hope the search for a franchisee is successful as I know this post office is very well used.

"Banbury's post office provides a great variety of support to those who live in the town and the surrounding villages."

According to the CWU, a further 40

to 50 offices have been earmarked for closure, which is likely to affect about 600 jobs.

CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey said: "This is devastating news for our members. It is death by a thousand cuts."

Post Office spokeswoman Melanie Corfield said there were already several successful franchise branches within the group's network, and that finding a franchisee to take over the Banbury office would be their preferred option.

She also stressed there were no plans to close the service in Banbury completely and that services would still be available to customers in some form.

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Geeks you're looking for

Vader's Stormtroopers and zombies aim to take Castle Quay by storm at fun event

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

JEDI will be on their guard as Darth Vader stalks the streets of Banbury later this month.

Thankfully, he is not expected to disturb the town's force. Instead, he is jetting in – though maybe not on the Death Star – for the town's first Geek Con event.

For one day only, Banbury will be invaded by zombies and Stormtroopers giving visitors the chance to get up close to their film and TV heroes.

The Comic Con-style event, to be held at Castle Quay on January 30, has been organised by local events company Banbury Presents.

There will be special appearances from five of the *Star Wars* bounty hunters in their original costumes. They will do guest signings and have photos with fans.

Event organiser and creative director Suzette Neptune, a sci-fi fanatic, said she cannot wait for visitors to indulge their inner-geek.

She added: "I've got a huge interest in sci-fi and fantasy and have been talking with people about doing this for a year now."

"I'm super excited for the day, especially when you realise that the great idea is going to happen."

"Being able to see all these great

characters and actors up close is a great opportunity for all of us.

"To see these iconic characters from *Star Wars* as well is awesome. It has been my favourite fantasy series since I was growing up."

Other guests will include *Red Dwarf* actress Hattie Hayridge and Virginia Hey, whose credits include *Farscape* and *Mad Max*.

They will be around the shopping centre all day to speak with visitors and sign autographs.

The visits have been arranged with the help of Glyn Smith, owner of comic book shop Comic Connections in Parson's Street.

Ms Neptune said: "While we have been really lucky to get hold of these star names we have made sure that there is a heavy local involvement as well."

"We have people from Banbury involved in organising and taking part in the event, which is not something you would usually get from Comic Cons."

Sci-fi fans can enjoy art exhibitions from local artists, stunt displays, martial artists and indoor science demonstrations.

Hardcore fans wanting to get involved can take part in zombie, cartoons and science workshops.

Banbury Presents was set up last year via the town council's Banbury Town Team vitality project, to organise local events.

The event is supported by Leamington Comic Con, the Phoenix Comic and Cherwell District Council. Doors open at 9am and entry is free. Search for Geek Con on Facebook.



Blue Watson, 14, of Cherwell Theatre Company, as Darth Vader, Suzette Neptune of Banbury Presents and Glyn Smith of Comic Connections get set for Geek Con

County set to let charity run hospital beds

HEALTH leaders look set to reject the wishes of campaigners and approve plans for a charity to run 14 beds at Chipping Norton Community Hospital.

The county council launched a consultation last year into the future of the 14 intermediate care beds at the Henry Cornish Care Centre.

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group proposed changing NHS staff managing the unit to staff at the Orders of St John Care Trust (OSJCT).

The other option it gave was to close the 14 beds and provide intermediate care in patients' homes instead.

Chipping Norton Hospital Action wants the unit run by NHS nurses, not OSJCT nurses, and is backed by West Oxfordshire District Council.

But the county's cabinet is recommended to approve plans to give control of the unit to OSJCT when it meets this week.

Chipping Norton Mayor Mike Tysoe called the decision "disgusting" and said the council was "taking the easy option".

Currently care is provided by the charity and Oxford Health Foundation Trust but health managers say this is too costly.

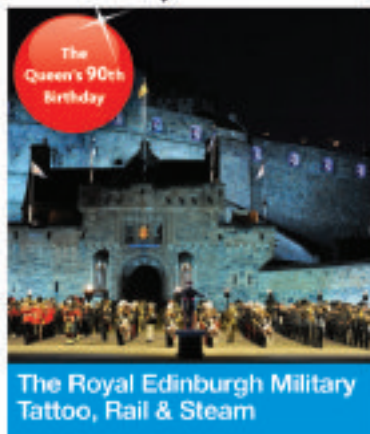
The charity providing the full 14-bed service would cost about £1,000 a bed and £728,000 a year, while care in patients' homes would cost £850 a head.

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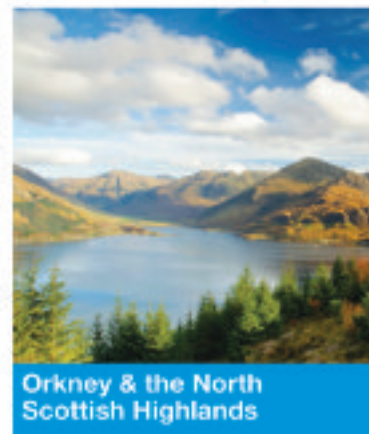
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Michael Goodwin, Benjamin Taylor, Caroline Berkley, Parris Pratley, Bethan Robinson, Finn Ridley, Harry Berks and Lesley Woodward

Pupils go stateside to consider equality

Students set to get insight into Quaker thinking at international conference to be held in Rhode Island

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

STUDENTS from Sibford School will be heading stateside next week to learn more about the history of equality.

They have been invited to take part in an international conference, 'Equality: Past, Present, Future', which will be held in Rhode Island.

It is part of the 19th annual Quaker Youth Leadership Conference.

The students will visit from February 4 to February 6, and will also stop off in New York to visit famous landmarks in-

cluding the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Broadway.

They will be joined by headteacher Michael Goodwin, who said: "Rhode Island's conflicted history of religious tolerance and slave trade provides an inspired backdrop against which the students can look back on past and present inequalities and reflect on what will be required to create a more equal tomorrow."

"They will also have the opportunity to undertake leadership training and to participate in community service."

"This includes visiting the Woman's Centre of Rhode Island, which helps victims of domestic violence, and Amos

House, a social services agency that provides hospitality and services to the homeless and poor of Rhode Island."

The conference is being jointly hosted by Moses Brown, a Friends' school which dates back to 1784, and Lincoln, an all-girls school founded by Quakers in 1884.

One of the students who will make the trip, Bethan Robinson, 17, said: "Although I've been to the States before I've never been to Rhode Island so I'm really looking forward to going to a new place and meeting new people."

"It will also be really interesting to explore the Quaker views of equality and to get involved with real life issues."

Primary school gears up to start as academy

A BANBURY primary school will start its new life as an academy from next week.

William Morris County Primary School will be taken over by the GLF Academy Trust from February 1.

The Bretch Hill school was forced into the change after an Ofsted report in May last year found major problems, including bullying and poor quality of teaching.

The report said governors had not been effective in holding school management to account over the progress that children made.

It added that pupils did not always listen to instructions and this had caused a slow down in learning.

The school's chairman of governors, Charlotte Christie, said: "Although this is a significant change to the way that the school is run, we do not expect that children will notice the



change. Staff, uniform and the school name will all remain the same."

Educational academies are funded by central government rather than local authorities, and are run by an academy trust, which employs the staff.

But they still have to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

The school will join other academies controlled by the trust, including ones in Surrey and Berkshire.

Seniors get extra help after lottery's funding

OLDER people in Banbury will be given help to tackle loneliness and isolation after a £17,500 grant was provided by the People's Postcode Lottery.

The money will go towards the Banbury Good Neighbours service, run by the Royal Voluntary Service, which pairs volunteers with older people in their local area.

As part of the service, volunteers help with basic tasks, such as shopping, lifts to medical appointments or social events and friendly chats.

The Royal Voluntary Service Oxfordshire operations manager, Abigail Hurrell, said: "Many people in Banbury are isolated and lonely and are finding it

difficult coping on their own, but we can provide a lifeline and support where friends or family are unable to.

"Whether it's a cup of tea and a chat or a lift to the shops, we can tailor the support to the needs of the older person."

The Good Neighbours service helps about 100 Banbury people, but organisers hope the grant will mean they can double that number. Other services include meals-on-wheels and support after leaving hospital.

People's Postcode Lottery's head of charities, Clara Govier, said: "We are delighted that this fantastic charity will be able to continue to change the lives of older people."

Rally to clean for the Queen

SCHOOLS, businesses and community groups in Banbury have been given a rallying call to clean up and celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday.

In March the town will be holding its biggest ever litter pick, in an effort to make the area look spotless for the big day in April.

People can take part in voluntary clean-ups of their local areas for three days between March 4 and 6.

It is part of the national campaign Clean for the Queen, which has been organised by Country Life magazine in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy.

The initiative has been backed by Banbury MP Victoria Prentis, who said it was important that people continued to take pride in how their community looked.

She said: "Although the big litter pick will take place over just three days, people can get



Clean dreams, from left, Tony Ilott, Kieron Mallon, Victoria Prentis, Ben Dyche of the street cleansing team, and Tina Wren involved whenever they like.

"While it will be fantastic to see the country coming together in March, it is the support and action people are taking, and not the dates, which are important."

Cherwell District Council will also be lending its support by loaning out litter picks, high visibility jackets and waste and recycling sacks.

The lead member for clean and green councillor, Debbie Pickford, said: "The Clean for

the Queen campaign is a fantastic opportunity to reinforce our vision for a cleaner, greener Cherwell by encouraging individuals, businesses and organisations to take part in the UK's largest ever litter pick."

The Queen's birthday falls on April 16 this year. People are encouraged to contact their local parish councils to find out if there are any organised litter picks in their area, or to sign up at cleanforthequeen.co.uk.



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Road hole cash blitz by county



Mary Sith with the wheel damage caused by a county pothole

Luke Sproule
lsproule@nqo.com

POTHOLE campaigners have welcomed news that Oxfordshire County Council more than doubled the money it spent repairing roads last year.

The authority spent £11m on road repair projects in 2014/15 – up from £4.6m in the previous year – and £4.2m patching potholes – up from £3.8m, according to the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

The 139 per cent rise in road repair spending was larger than any other council in England, with Cambridgeshire second and Norfolk third.

Motorist Paul Elliott, 49, of Deer Park, Witney, complained to the council about potholes in the town's Corn Street and on the A40.

He said: "The key is making repairs last longer. They need to be to high standard so they don't have to be done again."

"In the past couple of weeks, the potholes have got worse, particularly on the A40. The bad weather is causing the repairs to break up."

Mary Sith, of Bladon, near

Councillors more than double their spending on repairs to highways

Woodstock, fought for compensation after her car hit a pothole in 2013 in Lower Road.

She did not get compensation but said she hoped the extra spending meant other people would not be in the same position.

The 89-year-old said: "It is a good idea to increase spending on road repairs."

Mark Morrell visited Witney last year to highlight the state of the roads in the area.

He said: "To a certain extent every individual pothole repair is a waste of money."

"The average cost is about £50, so you need a long-term plan to eradicate them."

"It is good to hear that the county council is investing in capital road spending."

"There has been a lot done on main strategic routes, but when you go on to local roads you can find real defects."

County council cabinet member for transport David Nimmo Smith added: "We will keep asking for government money to bring our roads up to a better quality."

DISCOUNT STORE SEEKS STAFF AMID EXPANSION DRIVE

DISCOUNT supermarket chain Aldi is launching a recruitment drive at its stores across Oxfordshire.

The firm's expansion includes the opening of a new branch in Chipping Norton in March.

Posts include 40 assistants,

10 deputy managers and two assistant managers.

From February, staff will earn a minimum of £8.40 an hour, regardless of age.

Aldi has stores in Banbury, Oxford, Bicester, Carterton and Didcot. For job details, see aldirecruitment.co.uk.

Kids' wheelchair scheme given £5k

MORE than 350 disadvantaged children in Oxfordshire will get to use specialist wheelchairs thanks to a £5,000 grant from a national charity.

The Santander Foundation will fund and help maintain 12 chairs for children who have become less mobile due to injury or illness.

Money will be given to the British Red Cross Oxfordshire branch, which

offers a mobility aid loan service so children can enjoy their lives as much as possible.

The Foundation, which offers community grants to help disadvantaged people, will fund the chairs over five years.

Each child will have a chair for about two months, depending on their needs.

Red Cross Oxfordshire's senior community

fundraiser, Paula Falck, said: "This grant is timely and much appreciated."

"We have a shortage of specialised children's wheelchairs and this money will make sure we can help all the local children who need this service."

Andrew Baker, director at Santander's Banbury branch, said: "We hope the donation makes a real difference to children."

BIODIVERSITY FUNDING

OXON: Environmental projects to improve biodiversity can bid for up to £10,000 until March 28.

The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment is offering the funding.

Grants are also available for energy efficiency and sustainable use of renewable resources in community facilities.

Most grants are up to £5,000, but some are awarded up to £10,000. For full details, see trustforoxfordshire.org.uk



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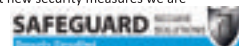
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First steps in the transphobia fight

Ministers take first steps in tackling discrimination of transgender people

Georgina Campbell
gcampbell@nqo.com

TACKLING transphobia will help give a voice to those too frightened to speak out against abuse, says an Oxfordshire man.

Finn Games said he suffered “appalling” aftercare following surgery, but, like many others in the transgender community, was too scared to say anything in case it was stopped completely.

But the 41-year-old, who lives in Jericho, Oxford, said a report this month urging ministers to tackle discrimination would be the first step in eradicating those fears.

He said: “To hear it publicly acknowledged that they are failing the people in the transgender community means so much.

“I have heard so many stories where transgender people have had GPs refuse to treat them.

“When I’ve gone to have surgery, it is always the aftercare I have had problems with.

“It was appalling. People do not treat you the same because you are transgender and they do not understand what you are going through.

“It was really frightening. You are too scared to say something because these are the people helping you, and if you make a complaint they could treat you even worse.”

Presented by Nicky Morgan, minister for women and equalities, the report is the first by a UK parliamentary committee to tackle transgender issues.

It estimates that as many as 650,000 people in the UK are “gender incongruent to some degree” and the transphobia they experience undermines their living standards and mental and physical health.

The strategy calls for the recognition of gender to be based on self-declaration, rather than a medical assessment.

Mr Games said: “We need to move transgender away from mental health services.

“At the moment it is still very much put into psychiatric treatment. This is not a mental health issue and it is sending out the wrong message.”

He also hopes ministers will look to shorten operation wait-



Clare Suttil, 70, of Banbury

ing times to reduce the risk of suicides.

He added: “Forty-one per cent of people attempt suicide while they wait for their operations.”

Seventy-year-old Clare Suttil, who lives in Banbury, said she considered suicide after the council initially refused to fund her operation.

She said: “It really got me

down. I was a bit suicidal because I just wanted to be the person I always knew I was.

“I was going to go to Thailand to have my surgery, because a friend recommended a hospital there.

“But, when I finally got the letter through from the council in 2009, it was the most wonderful feeling in the world.

“It is indescribable, finally becoming who you are.

“And now we are seeing youngsters in the same place. Support needs to be put in place for them and their families as they discover their identity.”

Rob Jordan, chairman of Oxford Pride, said it was unacceptable for transgender people not to have equal rights.

He said: “A transgender person has no legal recognition until the age of 18, and without parental consent would not be looked at as the person they truly know they are.”

Lottery success

A BRICK Hill resident in Hook Norton has scooped £1,000 because of their postcode.

The winner, who has not been named, took the People’s Postcode Lottery’s daily prize on January 14.

From every £2 ticket, 55p goes to good causes. Nearly £100 million has been raised for the charities by participants submitting their postcodes to take part.

Leading school

IN LAST week’s *Banbury Cake*, we featured a story on page eight about the appointment of Toby Spence as the new headteacher at Sibford School.

However, we incorrectly said that Toby Spence taught under-privileged children in Kenya. The school in Kenya was, in fact, a leading independent international co-educational day and boarding school.

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Rail line construction traffic fears

A CALL for a restriction on vehicle numbers during construction of the high speed rail line between London and Birmingham has been called for by Banbury’s MP.

Victoria Prentis raised her concerns for the HS2 route to a Commons select committee. The MP’s criticised a “lack of communication from HS2 Ltd” and fears of the effects of HGV

traffic and noise through villages in Banbury and Brackley.

Mrs Prentis said: “I was very grateful for the opportunity to stand up for north Oxfordshire.

“I made very clear to those present that transport was already a problem. I was very pleased that the HS2 Ltd’s

counsel advised that they would be producing illustrative plans

for Mixbury [near Brackley], with greater detail of the proposed mitigation.

“I pushed for changes to HGV movements around junction 11 of the M40 and on the A361 and hope that HS2 vehicle numbers will be severely restricted, and stopped on Saturdays.”

The first phase of HS2 will be going through the Chilterns to Birmingham.

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Oxfordshire Listings

Events

THURSDAY

The Responsive Eye Revisited: Sewell Centre Gallery, Radley College. A revival of the iconic 1965 Op Art exhibition at MOMA, New York, featuring paintings and constructions by Bridget Riley, Victor Vasarely, Peter Sedgley and others. 10am-4pm. Free admission. Until February 11. 01235 543039.

What Makes Us Human?: Crown and Thistle, Bridge Street, Abingdon. Dr Charles Pasternak, of the Oxford Biomedical Institute, will talk to the Abingdon-based ATOM Society. 7.30pm. Free to members, £3 non-members.

Art sale: West Ox Arts gallery, Market Square, Bampton. Sale of West Ox Arts members' work including paintings, sculpture, drawings, ceramics and artists' materials. 11.30am-4.30pm Runs until Sunday. 01993 850137.

Tokens of Love: The Oxfordshire Museum, Park Street, Woodstock. This exhibition traces the history of the Valentine from the early 19th-century onwards. It features objects from the museum's collection used as love tokens, including bobbins and corset stays to rings and photographs, via smocks and samplers and a collection of Valentine cards from Shell, who began sending Valentines greetings cards to their female drivers in 1938. Free admission. Until March 13. 01993 811456.

Abingdon Young Farmers: Manor Farm, Marcham. An organisation for young people with an interest in the countryside, which offers a range of social and sporting events, talks and visits. 7.45pm. £35-£40 per year.

D.I.T.T.O: Corn Exchange, High Street, Witney. A social club for disabled and vulnerable people. This month, there will be morris dancers and a new book club. 11am. Free. 07944 952658.

Robert Strange: Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot. During childhood, Robert Strange kept scrapbooks and diaries of thoughts, aspirations and images, which led to a fascination with collecting objects. From dice to plastic cracker toys, this colourful exhibition features detailed drawings alongside paintings, prints and photographs of everyday familiar items that we use and throw away. Opening times are Tuesday-Saturday 10am-6pm, Sunday 11am-4pm, closed Monday. Free admission. 01235 515144.

SATURDAY

Meet the artist: Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot. Meet Robert Strange, who has an exhibition at the centre (see above for details). There will be talks and interactive activities on the day. 01235 515144.

Freecycle live: The Mix Community Space, 15 Mill Street, Wantage. Bring usable items you no longer need and take anything you could do with. Small household items, toys, tools, DVDs, books, CDs, photos and/or descriptions of items too large to bring. Please do not bring electrical items, clothes, broken or unusable items, plus anything too large for one person to carry. Drop off goods between 10-11.30am only. Free admission. 07823 885492.

SATURDAY

Emergency Services Day: Bartholomew Room, Village Square,

Eynsham. Eynsham firefighters will be rowing a total of 36.5km (22.7 miles) in a relay on a static machine to highlight 365 Alive, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's road and fire safety initiative. People can book free home risk fire checks, and get fire and road safety advice. South Central Ambulance Service will be giving free demonstrations on CPR and defibrillator use, plus offering blood pressure checks in the Bartholomew Room in the Square. Drago the Dragon will be there for the children. 10.30am-3pm. 01865 842999.

Jumble sale: Village hall, Leys Road, Cumnor. There will be all the usual stalls, plus tombola, raffle and refreshments. 2pm. Entry 50p. Proceeds for NSPCC. Donations for the sale are welcome and anything sellable can be left at the village hall on Friday between 3-6 pm or on Saturday from 9am. 01865 327819.

Baby and children's items: Carterton Community Centre, Marigold Square, Shilton Park, Carterton. An indoor table-top sale of good-quality, previously owned baby and children's clothes, toys, books, shoes, equipment and maternity wear. 2pm. £1 admission, free after 3pm. Fee is £15 for sellers – to book a table, contact bandchooty@gmail.com

Antique and collectors market: Methodist Church, Oxford Road, Kidlington. Two halls of antiques, collectors' items and second-hand books. Refreshments available. 10am. Free admission. 01865 371494.

Jumble sale: Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon. All proceeds to Abingdon Peace Group. 11am. Entry 50p. 01235 526265.

MONDAY

Railway talk: Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot. The speakers will be Kevin Miller and Tom Pierpoint, from Network Rail and Great Western Railway respectively, who will be talking about the Great Western route electrification. 7.30pm.

TUESDAY

Knit a snood: No Two Things, 120 Broadway, Didcot. Learn to knit a fluffy snood, with staff of Harwell Crafts. All materials and tools provided. 7pm. £20. Booking is required on 01235 511550.

Yack and Yarn: The Bell, Charlbury. Bring along an ongoing knitting or crocheting project, have a chat and unwind over a glass of wine at the group meeting on the first Tuesday of the month. Everyone is welcome, regardless of ability. Yarn, crochet hooks and knitting needles can be provided. 7.30-9.30pm. Free. Contact Louise Cashman for further information on 07867 880237 or charlburywi@outlook.com

Pottery painting for men: No Two Things, 120 Broadway, Didcot. Valentine's session for men create the perfect pottery piece for their loved ones. 7pm. £25. Booking is required on 01235 511550.

WEDNESDAY

Fieldpaths walk: A circular 5.5-mile walk from Chilton across the Downs to Blewbury, returning via Upton and the dismantled railway. Meet at the church in Chilton, ref. SU489859, at 10am. Bring refreshments for a break. Assistance dogs only. 07855 170592.

Oxfordshire Yeomanry talk: The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Park Street, Woodstock. Retired colonel John

To get an event of any kind listed here, enter the details into our easy-to-use online database at thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/events

Please add your event no later than ten days before the day of publication.

Bridgeman will give a talk on 600 years of Oxfordshire Yeomanry from the Black Prince to the present day, taking the audience through the history of Winston Churchill's own regiment, whose archive is housed at museum. 7pm. £5. 01993 810211.

Theatre

THURSDAY

Rapunzel: Corn Exchange, Market Place, Wallingford. Pantomime recounting the classic tale of how a handsome prince rescues his beloved from her lofty prison cell by climbing up her long hair to reach her. But the path of true love never runs smoothly and he must overcome prickly obstacles to achieve his goal. Performances continue on Thursday and Friday at 7.30pm, Saturday at 2.30pm and 7.30pm. Tickets £12, concessions £10, children £6 from www.cornexchange.org.uk or 01491 825000.

Snow White: Village hall, Church Road, Chinnor. In Chinnor Players' pantomime, The Good Fairy waves her magic wand and tells the tale of how poor Snow White is hated by her nasty stepmother who is not only jealous of her beauty, but, would like Prince Michael, who is in love with Snow White, for herself. Adults £8.50, concessions £6.60. Performances are 7.45pm on Thursday and Friday, 11am, 3pm and 8pm on Saturday. Tickets available at the Spar Store, Church Road, Chinnor. 01844 354901.

Sleeping Beauty Untold: Adderbury Institute, The Green, Adderbury. A twist on the traditional tale of *Sleeping Beauty*. Can true love overcome a heart hardened by betrayal? A show for all the family with singing, dancing, fairies, soldiers and compost. Thursday and Friday at 7.30pm, Saturday at 2.30pm and 7.30pm. £8.

CADS auditions: Upstairs room, Methodist hall, Fishers Lane, Charlbury. Charlbury Amateur Dramatics Society (CADS) will be having open auditions for its May production *Dancing at Lughnasa* on Tuesday and Thursday at 7.45pm. This multi-award winning play – which was made into a film starring Meryl Streep – is about five impoverished spinster sisters in a remote part of Ireland in 1936. There are parts for five women, with ages ranging from late 20s to early 50s, and three young men. An ability to speak with a soft southern Irish accent is desirable. Help is also needed backstage. For information, contact CADS chairman Tim Widdows at CotswoldFrames@01608811805.

FRIDAY

Knight Fever: Village Centre, Kennington Road, Kennington. Kennington Amateur Dramatic Society is promising knights, a dragon, and lots of audience participation in its pantomime. The fair kingdom of Camelot is under threat from the evil Black Knight and all seems lost until brave Justin, a humble stable boy is quick to step into the breach. Performances on Friday at 8pm and Saturday at 2pm and 7.30pm. Adults, £8.50, concessions £6.50, family £25. 01865 739025.

SATURDAY

Happily Ever After?: Faringdon Junior School, The Elms, Gloucester Street, Faringdon. In this new pantomime by Faringdon Dramatic Society, chaos ensues when a wicked witch and her gang of fairytale baddies have finally had enough of losing to the good guys and decide to steal the Great Storybook, the magical book that holds the key to all the 'Happily Ever Afters' there have ever been. It is up to Cinderella and her loyal friends to try to sort out the pandemonium, with a little help from her Fairy Godmother. 2.30pm and 7.30pm on Saturday, 7.30pm on Sunday. Adults £8, under-16s £6. Tickets from Hare in The Woods, 7A Market Place, Faringdon.

The Ruff Guide to Shakespeare: Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot. Specially created to mark the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, the production is a celebration of the work of the world's greatest playwright. Expect silly sketches, toe-tapping songs, daft dance routines and extracts from his plays. Suitable for anyone over five years old, the show is an introduction to Shakespeare and to the Tudor England. 6pm. £8.50, concessions £6.50. 01235 515144.

SUNDAY

Funky Monkey and the Juicy Fruits: Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot. Full of comedy, music, participation and puppetry, there is lots for children aged three to seven to love in this jungle adventure. Ahead of the show at 2pm, there is a make a Funky Rod puppet workshop, led by professional puppeteer Emma Boor at noon. £8.50, concessions £6.50. 01235 515144.

Music

THURSDAY

Graffiti Classics: The Theatre, Chipping Norton. The group, comprising 16 strings, eight dancing feet and four voices have one aim: to make classical music funny and exhilarating for everyone. 7.45pm. Adults £14, concessions £12. 01608 642350.

FRIDAY

Richard Digance: The Theatre, Chipping Norton. Not just a singer/guitarist, but one of the country's most celebrated comedy entertainers. He has supported Steve Martin, Robin Williams and played a guitar duet with Brian May. 7.45pm. Adults £16, concessions £14. 01608 642350.

Absolute Blondie: The Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon. Tribute to Debbie Harry and Blondie. Expect to hear all the classic songs that will have you dancing along, such as *One Way or Another*, *Heart of Glass* and *Call Me*. 7.30pm. £10 in advance, £12 on the door. 01235 856076.

The Summits: White Horse Bicester, Churchill Road, Bicester. Male covers duo. 8.30pm. Free entry. 01869 253135.

Christina Johns: General Foods

Sports and Social Club, Spiceball Park, Banbury. Mixture of soul, motown and country. 8.30pm. 01295 252852.

Jason Pegg: Angel, Market Square, Witney. Covers from the 1970s to present. 9pm. Free entry. 01993 703238.

SATURDAY

Darren Hunt: Tetsworth Sports and Social Club, The Green, Tetsworth. Rock music. 9pm. 01844 213941.

MONDAY

Lucy Rose: The Theatre, Chipping Norton. The Warwickshire singer-songwriter's pop/folk style blends together to create a gorgeous mix of vocals and guitar and her music is frequently played on BBC Radio 1 and Radio 2. She will perform an acoustic set ahead of her European tour. 7.45pm. £15. 01608 642350.

Dance

THURSDAY

Sequence/ballroom dancing: Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock. Teaching from 7.30-8.30pm. Practise what you have learned until 10.30pm. £2. 01993 812094.

Witney Folk Dance Group: Madley Park Hall, Northfield Farm Lane, Witney. Learn and enjoy English country dances. 8pm. £3, includes raffle and coffee. 01993 705961.

FRIDAY

Country and Western dance: Carterton Social Centre, Brownes Lane, Carterton. Carterton Country Music Club – Dancing to Dorne Valley Country Band, 8-11.45pm. £6. 01993 850682.

SATURDAY

Winter ceilidh: Village hall, Main Street, Grove. Stomping barn dance, with Melobo and caller Jane Bird. Old Speckled Hen North West Morris will dance during half-time and real ale will be supplied by West Berkshire Brewery. No experience is necessary. Bus service stops right outside the hall (Grove Green). 8pm. Adults £7, under-16s £3.50. 07855 548512.

Chris the Hombre: Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock. Country and Western music and dancing. 8.30pm. Free entry, but donations welcomed. 01993 812094.

MONDAY

Scottish country dancing: The Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon. You can start any week. Beginners welcome, come alone or bring a friend. 8pm. £5 to join, then £2 each time you come. 01235 528154.

Morris winter practice: Recreation Hall, Main Street, Long Hanborough. Masons Apron Northwest welcomes new and experienced dancers to join our winter practices. The side has a full summer diary for local danceouts and festivals. It is a good way of making new friends and keeping fit. Musicians are welcome to join the group's band. 8.15pm. 01993 200717.

TUESDAY

Tea dance: Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock. Enjoy a dance or just a chat with friendly crowd. 2pm. £2. Entrance includes tea/coffee and cake. 01993 812094.

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SPOTLIGHT (15, 129 mins). Drama/Thriller. Michael Keaton, Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams, Liev Schreiber, John Slattery, Brian d'Arcy, Stanley Tucci, Billy Crudup, Len Cariou. Director: Thomas McCarthy

IN 2002, the *Spotlight* Investigations team at the *Boston Globe* ran a series of meticulously researched articles, exposing the sexual abuse of minors in a local archdiocese.

Coverage compelled other victims to come forward, sending shockwaves through the Roman Catholic church.

Thomas McCarthy's impeccably crafted drama pays tribute to the close-knit team of tenacious editors and reporters who pursued the truth.

Ben Bradlee Jr (John Slattery) presides over the newsroom and its *Spotlight* team led by Robby Robinson (Michael Keaton).

Robby and colleagues Michael Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo), Sacha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams) and Matt Carroll (Brian d'Arcy) invest thousands of hours into following leads.

An attorney (Stanley Tucci) claims to have documents proving the cardinal knew about abuse and did nothing.



Spotlight stars Michael Keaton, Liev Schreiber, Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams, John Slattery, Brian d'Arcy James, above; left, top, De Niro and Ephron in *Dirty Grandpa*; bottom, *Capture the Flag*



DIRTY GRANDPA (15, 102 mins). A comedy/romance with Robert De Niro, Zac Efron and Zoey Deutch.

Director: Dan Mazer
DIRECTOR Dan Mazer and screenwriter John Phillips bring us a raunchy cross-generational road trip that pairs Robert De Niro with Zac Efron.

It's a tantalising juxtaposition – wizened, worldly experience and youthful exuberance – and the expletive-laden script should mine a rich vein of humour by upending expectations.

Alas, the drunken fraternity humour is occasionally distasteful. De Niro visibly savours his feisty old coot's potty-mouthed outbursts, while Efron gamely loses his shirt and

his trousers. Man of mystery Dick Kelly (De Niro) buries his wife and emotionally blackmails his grandson Jason (Efron) into driving him to their summer home in Florida.

"It's what she would have wanted," Dick assures Jason, a corporate lawyer about to marry his controlling fiancée.

Dirty Grandpa The pair weather numerous indignities with abandon.

CAPTURE THE FLAG (U, 94 mins).

An animated sci-fi comedy with the voices of Paul Kelleher, Sam Fink and Lorraine Pilkington.

Director: Enrique Gato
EVER since Apollo 11 touched down on the moon in 1969,

conspiracy theorists have suspected an elaborate hoax.

They maintain the iconic footage was faked at a film studio and enforce these claims with supposed proof of scientific inaccuracies in the grainy recording.

Capture The Flag is an animation that teases the possibility of the hoax, but debunks it by travelling back to the moon with a NASA veteran and two children.

The adventure has its sentimental heart in the right place.

It's all well-intentioned and predictable, shot largely from the perspective of a gung-ho boy, who just wants to make his

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It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

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that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done. We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service the Oxford, Banbury & Abingdon areas and James is finding that his approach is a major factor

in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for,

which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give James a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!



Cake Bookworm

THE Astonishing Return Of Norah Wells by Virginia Macgregor, hardback, £14.99 (ebook £10.49)

THIS marks the triumphant return of Virginia Macgregor, author of *What Milo Saw*. Macgregor affirms her place at the forefront of contemporary fiction with a novel so engaging and powerful you'll want to read it in one sitting. But this is a novel that should be cherished and savoured, for its ending will come all too soon and it's a wrench to be parted from this wonderful family. Macgregor shapes some of the most delightful and endearing characters you'll read, and is a poignant reminder of the beautiful and enduring bonds that exist between humans. Her exploration of family begins when a mother, Norah Wells, walks out on her husband, Adam, their eight-year-old daughter Ella, baby Willa and dog Louis, leaving only the briefest of notes to dissuade him from looking for her.

Six years on, Norah returns, but a new mother has taken her place. Is it too early to say this is one of the best books of 2016?

The Portable Veblen by Elizabeth McKenzie, hardback by 4th Estate, £12.99 (ebook £8.49)

IF YOU see squirrels as rats with bushy tails, here's a warning: this review contains vermin (and nuts). But if your every encounter with a squirrel is akin to a fairytale, then you're going to love Veblen Amundsen-Hovda, the quirky protagonist in American author Elizabeth McKenzie's utterly charming new novel. We meet her in California's Palo Alto, at the moment of her engagement to neuroscientist Paul Vreeland, spied on by a squirrel. As the tale unfolds, and they plan their wedding, we're introduced to the supporting cast of their lives and taken back to their childhoods, to find out how they became the eccentric

30-somethings they are. McKenzie gently teases out what makes this pair tick, as individuals melding their identities into a couple, making them some of the most acutely drawn characters I've ever read. A true joy of a book.

Love Me Back by Merritt Tierce, hardback by Corsair, £14.99 (ebook £7.99)

CAN you wholeheartedly enjoy something, but find it deeply uncomfortable at the same time? This debut novel by Texas-born Merritt Tierce is proof you can. Barely out of her own childhood, waitress Marie is divorced and mum to a girl she only gets to see on alternate weekends. Life is a mess of booze, drugs, self-harm and pain. It's a pattern driven by guilt and pain, which Marie manages to hide behind her professionalism at work. Tierce's pacy prose pulls you along with her. There's no pausing for apologies, or sentimental explanations.

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Mark Bell scored twice from the penalty spot during Banbury United's 5-0 victory over Bashley in the Evo-Stik Southern League

United thrash poor Bashley

Brilliant Puritans score five in dominant victory

IN-FORM Banbury United hammered basement club Bashley 5-0 to move up to fourth in the table.

The visitors took the lead with an eighth-minute penalty converted by Ricky Johnson after he had been brought down by keeper Kieran Greene.

But the Puritans' leading scorer saw a second spot-kick saved, after a foul on Felipe Barcelos.

With the offender Aaron Dunne being sent off, Banbury dominated against ten men.

Three minutes before half-time, George Nash

made it 2-0 from Callum White's cross.

And it became 3-0 when Banbury were awarded their third penalty of the game for a foul on Callum White.

Mark Bell took over the spot-kick duties and made no mistake.

Darius Browne made it 4-0 five minutes later after good work by Bell and Barcelos, before substitute Leam Howards completed their nap hand.

Banbury Utd: Harding, White, Welch-Hayes, Nash, Westbrook, Gunn, Bell, Stanbridge (Martin 74), Johnson (McEachran 64), Barcelos (Howards 73), Browne.

Sub not used: Wise.

Attendance: 126.

	EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE									
	Division 1 South									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Cinderford Tn	24	18	4	2	49	14	58			
Taunton Tn	26	17	6	3	53	21	57			
Supermarine	25	16	4	5	47	25	52			
Banbury Utd	26	14	9	3	66	26	51			
Winchester	24	15	4	5	60	39	49			

North Leigh	26	15	3	8	55	25	48			
Tiverton Tn	26	13	9	4	45	29	48			
Evesham Utd	26	12	7	7	46	26	43			
Shortwood	24	13	2	9	46	40	41			
Didcot Tn	26	12	4	10	51	43	40			
AFC Totton	28	11	3	14	54	55	36			
Bishops Cleeve	21	9	7	5	33	34	34			
Yate Tn	26	8	10	10	33	33	32			
Larkhall Ath	27	8	7	12	42	46	31			
Marlow	25	8	4	13	40	46	28			
Slough	25	7	7	11	27	33	28			
Mangotsfield	26	7	7	12	37	48	28			
Wimborne Tn	27	8	3	16	50	60	27			
Bridgwater Tn	27	7	4	16	28	53	25			
Wantage Tn	26	5	2	19	32	64	17			

Burnham	27	4	4	19	29	62	16			
Bashley	24	0	0	24	9	116	0			

Bulls march on at the top after fine win

BANBURY maintained their four-point lead at the top of Midlands 2 West South with a 27-10 victory away to Berkswell & Balsall.

An Ed Phillips penalty gave them the lead, before Josh Deegan crossed.

Captain Phillips added the extras to make it 10-0.

The hosts responded with a penalty, but Banbury led 17-3 at the break when Phillips converted his own try after finishing off a fine break from Joe Mills.

Matt Goode's score stretched the visitors' lead by five points, but the hosts refused to roll over.

A perfectly-executed maul led to a converted try to make it 22-10.

However, Bulls made sure of the victory when centre Goode crossed for his second score of the match.

Phillips could not convert and Banbury held on, despite losing Sean Banister and Sam Stoop to the sin-bin.

STARS with Claire Petulengro

Service provided by IMS Leeds LS1 8LB. Calls cost 60p per minute at all times

ARIES

Mar 21-Apr 19

As you enter February you start to see with clarity what you need to do to get ahead of the game in business and finances. Meetings you arrange for the coming seven days are set for success as you speak and think with clarity and understanding. Use these wonderful aspects to arrange to see the very faces you've done such a good job of avoiding. Ring now to make sense of mixed romantic messages.

0906 585 4360

LIBRA

Sep 23-Oct 22

Try not to break promises you have made to close ones, as they will be relying on your words more than you may think. Follow through and show you can be trusted. It can make all the difference to how a relationship in your life ends up this month. Truth be told Libra, if you are breaking your word, your heart may not really be in it? Ring now to hear what you need from a partner.

0906 585 4366

TAURUS

Apr 20-May 20

You can afford to spoil yourself as you discover good news on both a personal and a professional level which gives you the ego boost you've been lacking since you entered 2016. The coming year offers hard work, but incredible rewards and this week you work out your base plan to achieve such results. Contracts signed now promise luck. Ring now to make the most of this dramatic week.

0906 585 4361

GEMINI

May 21-Jun 20

You can cover more ground in the coming week than you have in the last six. You've worked out what and who was holding you back and cut all deadwood from your life. Your ruling planet Mercury hands you the power of communication on a silver platter. New attractions are different, but say a lot about how you've changed. Ring now so we can talk in more detail.

0906 585 4362

CANCER

Jun 21-Jul 22

I can see that you've had a lot of stress in your life and I can also see that you're ready to ask for help. Your ruling planet the moon makes for a more emotional weekend than usual where you're prepared to speak about what's weighing you down. Luckily for you, others are also willing to help you find solutions. Ring now to hear how I know that exciting travel is imminent.

0906 585 4363

LEO

Jul 23-Aug 22

You can deal with ease with those who normally rub you up the wrong way. You see Leo, Saturn has managed to make you more aware that where there is a problem, there is also opportunity. This is a week in which those who didn't know your name will finally learn it as you shine in the face of difficulty. Home affairs offer a conclusion. Ring now to hear how you need to show more trust in.

0906 585 4364

VIRGO

Aug 23-Sep 22

Matters of the heart come to the fore and you start to get more in touch with how you feel. You no longer worry about how others view your actions, but you think about what you want long term. You no longer judge new faces by their past, but how they act in present situations and this makes a huge difference. Ring now to hear how the Sun helps you find faith in love again.

0906 585 4370

SCORPIO

Oct 23-Nov 21

Jealousy is evident in your chart and it is making it hard for you to see straight. Try not to guess the next move of a close one or you will be accusing them of things they have not even thought of doing yet. Things you reach for in your career turn to gold and you start to realise you can afford to aim higher. Ring now to hear why this is a great week for job interviews and tests.

0906 585 4367

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 22-Dec 21

If you've lost money then this is the week you can recoup funds. You start to see what needs to be done to impress those around you and no longer are you put off by challenges. You're enticed by them. Focus on the small things as well as the big, as it's attention to detail which can see you reaching the finishing line first. Ring now to find fresh inspiration and faith in love this month.

0906 585 4368

CAPRICORN

Dec 22-Jan 19

I know you've made mistakes, but it's time to move on from them instead of continually blaming yourself Capricorn. You've changed and grown so much, so the lessons you learnt were worthwhile. A surprise union which emerges gives you the courage to be more honest with the choices you now make in life. Ring now to make this the month you realise your potential.

0906 585 4369

AQUARIUS

Jan 20-Feb 18

Lies and tall stories come back on you, so don't tell them. You would be wise to be more honest with close ones as they already know far more than you could possibly imagine. New flirtations have the potential to be so much more. Have faith in your ability to hold high standards. Ring now to hear why this is a week for confrontation in business and financial issues.

0906 585 4370

PISCES

Feb 19-Mar 20

Family issues have proved harder to deal with than you thought and you may be finding it hard to know how much you should tell close ones about what's really been going on in your life. Be civil to all you meet this week. Certain faces hold higher positions than you may at first think and any rudeness could have a negative effect. Ring now to right a wrong from the past.

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SEAT Ibiza is set for more success

In brief

- **JAGUAR** is to build an F-Type British Design Edition. In hard or soft-top styles, it will have a choice of four paint colours including red, white and blue, a 375bhp V6 engine, the Exterior Sport Design Pack, upgraded brakes and edition-specific black leather seats with contrasting piping in Union Jack-derived colours. There will be British Design Edition badges and special trim. The car will be automatic and four-wheel drive. Top speed is 171mph, with the 0-60mph in 4.9 seconds. Audiophiles will appreciate the 380W Meridian sound system upgrade, with can be improved boosted with a 12-speaker surround sound set-up. Ian Callum, director of design, said: "The F-Type [has] a visual drama that is both individual and very British. It gave us the opportunity to subtly enhance the way the F-Type looks – inside and out."
- **THE Peugeot 205 GTI** has been voted best hot hatch ever in a global poll revealed at the Performance Car Show at the NEC Birmingham. It saw off other hatches in the public vote.

Auto facts

Model: SEAT Ibiza Vista 5dr
Price: £13,445
Insurance group: 9E
Fuel consumption (Combined): 54.3mpg
Top speed: 107mph
Length: 406.1cm/160in
Width: 169.3cm/66.6in
Luggage capacity: 10.3 cu ft
Fuel tank capacity: 9.9 gallons/45 litres
CO2 emissions: 118g/km
Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles

David Duffy
david.duffy@nqo.com

NEW engines, advanced technology and a fresh new look. What's not to like about the latest version of SEAT's global best-seller?

The Ibiza hatchback has always been fun to drive, but a new speed-sensitive electric steering system and re-tuned springs, dampers and anti-roll bars combine to deliver tangible improvements to ride and handling.

Power comes from a new generation of petrol and turbo-diesel engines, with the Vista model tested here, using the entry-level, three-cylinder, 1.0-litre petrol engine. This produces 75 horsepower.

This would be perfect as a first car and younger buyers have always figured strongly as Ibiza buyers. With an average age of 43, the Ibiza has an exceptionally young customer base.

Move up the petrol range and in come turbocharged 95 and 110 horsepower engines and a four-cylinder 1.4 Eco TSI that develops 150 horsepower.

Among the new three-cylinder diesel engines, the 1.4 TDI achieves fuel consumption of 83.1 mpg, and each of the other TDI powertrains, with 90 or 105



The Ibiza hatchback would be ideal as a first car for younger buyers

horsepower, achieve 74.3 mpg or more.

At first glance, the styling instantly reflects the sharper looks of the larger Leon with new headlights and LED running lights, but the similarities go well beyond external looks.

Like the Leon, SEAT has beefed up the technology packed into the car, particularly in terms of connectivity.

Even the Vista model comes with a dashboard-mounted touchscreen, allowing easy Bluetooth connection to a phone and both USB and Aux-in connections for iPod.

The Ibiza, which is available in five-door, three-door Sport Coupé and the Sport Tourer versions, has also had improvements made to safety systems.

A new tiredness recognition system uses feedback from the steering wheel to spot the first signs of drowsiness and give a warning. Another new safety system, called multi-collision brake, cuts in after a serious impact, slowing the vehicle and switching on the hazard lights.

With more than five million sold worldwide over the past 30 years, the Ibiza is set to continue as a SEAT success.

F1 should go back to basics

A LONG history of the BBC broadcasting Formula One racing has come to an end.

In a move to save costs, the BBC has ditched its right to televise F1, which will now shift to Channel 4 as the terrestrial broadcaster in conjunction with Sky. While it's a sad day for the BBC, it raises the question of whether or not Formula One should persist in its current form, or at all.

It has been clear for years the governing body of motorsport, the FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile) and the power brokers of F1 have wanted to shift the racing to more lucrative emerging markets. Hence the reason for races in Russia, China, the United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan.

None of these countries has

much in the way of a motorsport heritage and their inclusion puts a much greater strain on the teams that have to contest 21 races in the 2016 calendar. While not having a sporting heritage should not be a bar to inclusion, it also means attracting large crowds is trickier.

There is no doubt Formula One can be one of the greatest spectacles in sport. Throughout its history, F1 has thrown up unlikely heroes that have had us all on the edge of our seats.

However, the sport is now more about business and generating large piles of cash for those at the top of the heap. The drivers still have to push themselves to the limit in every race, but team orders and tactics can take precedence over pure racing.

The governing body, the teams,

drivers and circuit owners need to get together and remember why this branch of motorsport was once the greatest of all. It's not slipped from that position because MotoGP is so amazing to watch or rallying is more dramatic, it's simply because F1 has lost sight of what makes it the pinnacle of petrol-powered sport.

Do away with the aerodynamics, the team orders and the convoluted qualifying. Get back to cars that are the fastest machines the human mind can make and then let the drivers get on with it.

This is no plea to go back to the horrific days of drivers being killed. Along with simplifying the cars and racing, safety should always be the first priority and never stop developing, but that can go hand in hand with exciting motorsport.

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